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ABSTRACT

The evaluation process for tenured faculty at community colleges was studied. A total of 857 faculty and administrators from nine member colleges of the League for Innovation in the Community College completed questionnaires. Research concerns included: whether formal evaluation policies and procedures existed for tenured faculty; purposes of both pre-tenure and post-tenure evaluation at individual colleges; evaluation criteria; staff members responsible for faculty evaluation; whether post-tenure evaluation accomplishes its stated purpose; and differences in attitudes among tenured faculty, nontenured faculty, and administrators regarding the perceived need, purpose, and value of post-tenure evaluation. Findings include: over 77 percent of respondents indicated that formal post-tenure evaluation existed at their college; 56.8 percent of administrators and 45.9 percent of faculty identified faculty development as the main stated purpose for post-tenure evaluation; 59.1 percent of administrators and 49.6 percent of faculty reported that the main stated purpose of pre-tenure evaluation was to provide information for personnel decisions; and over 88 percent of respondents felt that different evaluation plans or criteria were needed to better accommodate individual faculty interests. (SW)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE STATUS OF POST-TENURE FACULTY EVALUATION IN SELECTED COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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This paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, March 15-17, 1985. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

An Investigation of the Status of Post-Tenure Facuty Evaluation in Selected Community Colleges

Theoretical Framework

Converging economic, cultural, political and demographic elements in the higher education environment have coalesced recently to create general interest in creating ways to foster institutional flexibility and faculty vitality in a steady-state, faculty employment market (Baldwin, 1982; Furniss, 1981; Mingle, 1980). Some commentators advocate increasing faculty vitality through the practice of post-tenure review (Bennett and Chater, 1984; Bevan, 1980; Chait and Ford, 1982; Linnell, 1979; Linney, 1979). The National Commission on Higher Education Issues (1982) recently suggested that "nothing will undermine the tenure system more completely than its being regarded as a system to protect faculty members from evaluation" (p. 10).

Others in the field assert that post-tenure review practices "might allow colleges a means of eliminating their proverbial deadwood, or more constructively, to help keep it alive" (Moore 1980, p. 16). Chait and Ford (1982) propose that faculty evaluation procedures continue beyond the pre-tenure review period. Furniss (1978) recommends regular reviews of the work of tenured faculty as a means of fostering quality

and responsiveness in institutions facing the reality of a steady state. Apart from the reported institutional practices at Coe College, St. Lawrence University, Earlham College and Carlton College (Chait and Ford 1982; Faculty Affairs Committee Earlham College 1975; Zuckert and Friedhoff, 1980), the only research study to date that investigates, specifically, the status of post- tenure evaluation was conducted by Bolden (1979) and was limited to the 14 public four-year colleges and universities in the state of Alabama.

Thus, while philosophical and theoretical support for the concept of post-tenure evaluation is evident, very little descriptive data related to the process and practice are available. For the community college, it is almost non-existent.

The present study attempted to fill this research void by examining the following research questions as they applied to the community college:

- Do formal policies and procedures exist for the evaluation of tenured community college faculty?
- What is the primary stated purpose for post-tenure evaluation within individual institutions?
- Is the primary stated purpose for post-tenure evaluation the same as for pre-tenure evaluation?
- What criteria are used to evaluate tenured faculty? a. Which faculty functions are evaluated? b. How much emphasis is placed on each function? c. Do

the criteria accommodate individual and departmental differences and priorities? d. Should the criteria used for review of tenured faculty differ from those used to review non-tenured faculty?

- Who within the institution participates in the evaluation of tenured faculty?
- Is post-tenure evaluation effective in accomplishing its stated institutional purpose?
- What differences in attitudes exist among tenured faculty, non-tenured faculty and administrators regarding the perceived need, purpose and value of post-tenure evaluation?
- What changes are suggested by faculty and administrators to increase the effectiveness of pre-tenure and post-tenure evaluation plans?

Methods

Two survey questionnaires were constructed, critiqued by a panel of experts, revised, field tested and administered to a sample population. One form of the questionnaire was developed for faculty responses, and the other form was developed for administrator responses. Approximately 90% of the questions were similar on both forms.

The sample population consisted of nine institutions in the League for Innovation in the Community

College. The League for Innovation is a well-established national consortium comprised of 18 community colleges. From this population, a sample was chosen that included 1,290 faculty (tenured and non-tenured) and 421 administrators (department chair level to dean level) in nine institutions. The sampling plan included a 30% random sample selection of tenured faculty and a 100% sampling of non-tenured faculty and administrators.

Data Sources

A total of 857 questionnaires were returned, representing a 50.1% response rate. Once collected, the data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Nonparametric measures were generated including frequency distributions, mean scores and Chi-Square analyses.

Results and/or Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The data support the fact that formal post-tenure evaluation exists in the nine participating community colleges. Over 77 percent of all respondents indicated that formal post-tenure evaluation did exist at their institution. Likewise, approximately 94.8 percent of all respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that post-tenure evaluation for the purpose

of assessing performance and development needs should exist.

2. The majority of administrators and faculty, 56.8 percent and 45.9 percent respectively, indicated that the primary stated purpose for post-tenure evaluation at their institution was faculty development and improvement. Furthermore, when asked what should be the primary purpose, the results showed little change, with the majority of administrators and faculty (52.9 percent and 48.4 percent) indicating that the desired purpose should be for faculty development and improvement.

3. Interestingly, both administrators (59.1 percent) and faculty (49.6 percent) reported that the primary stated purpose, as well as their own preferred purpose, for pre-tenure evaluation was to provide information needed to make such personnel decisions as promotion, retention, dismissal and normal salary increments. Thus, a difference in purposes for pre- and post-tenure evaluation was reported.

4. The department chairperson was described by respondents as the most frequent participant in the evaluation process. However, strong agreement was advanced that there should be multiple sources of input into post-tenure evaluation including administrators, peers, students and self.

5. The most influential and frequently used criteria in post-tenure evaluation as reported by both administrators and facutly are: a) Classroom Effectiveness, however measured; b) Contributions to Department; c) Attendance and Reliability; d) Campus Committee Work; e) Course or Curriculum Development; f) Innovation in Teaching Methods.

These are also the criteria that administrators and faculty prefer to remain as the most influential.

6. The data also suggest that the present evaluation plans and criteria need to be modified to better accommodate individual faculty interests and/or departmental/divisional priorities. Over 88 percent felt that some type of change was needed to better accommodate faculty interests and over 89 percent felt changes were needed to accommodate department/division priorities.

7. The effectiveness of post-tenure evaluation in accomplishing its stated purpose is uncertain. Approximately 71 percent of the faculty and 75 percent of the administrators indicated that they were either uncertain about the effectiveness or felt that the evaluation was ineffective.

8. Two predominant reasons emerged for this reported uncertainty or ineffectiveness. The majority of administrators (55.1 percent) and faculty (41.8 percent) reported that post-tenure evaluation did not provide an effective mechanism to measure competence and incompetence

and 27.6 percent of administrators and 33.9 percent of faculty indicated that the evaluation paid only lip service to faculty development.

9. The number of respondents who suggested changes in the post-tenure evaluation process at their institution indicated that there was some dissatisfaction with the present process. The recommendations made most frequently included the following:

a. Evaluation should be more supportive and less threatening by more emphasis and direct tie to faculty development.

b. Criteria for evaluation should be more specific and objective, helping to reduce subjectivity.

c. A substantial reward system should be developed

d. Student involvement should be increased.

e. Frequency of evaluations should be decreased with option that evaluation occur if circumstances warrant.

f. Evaluation plan should include evaluation criteria related to individual faculty or divisional goals.

g. Evaluation needs more rigor and clout to be taken as a serious process with consequences.

h. Peer involvement should be increased.

10. An overwhelming majority of both administrators and faculty (over 80 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the following opinion statements:

- o There should be periodic post-tenure evaluation for tenured faculty to assess the level of performance and developmental needs.
- o Tenured faculty should welcome periodic assessment of their overall performance.
- o There should be a faculty development program implemented in conjunction with the post-tenure evaluation plan.
- o There should be multiple sources of input to post-tenure evaluation including administrators, peers, students and self.
- o Post-tenure evaluation increases the likelihood of faculty growth and vitality.

Likewise, a substantial majority (over 60 percent) disagreed with the following statements:

- o Only administrators should evaluate tenured faculty.
- o Only tenured colleagues should evaluate tenured faculty.
- o Post-tenure evaluation leads to the weeding out of the incompetent.

11. A Chi square analysis indicated that administrators, despite tenure status, did not differ significantly in their attitudes and opinions about post-tenure

evaluation. As a group, they tended to more strongly agree with statements supporting post-tenure evaluation.

12. On the other hand, tenured and non-tenured faculty differed significantly (at the .05 level) in their attitudes and opinions in relationship to six opinion statements. In particular, tenured faculty tended to disagree more than non-tenured faculty with the following statements:

a. There should be periodic post-tenure evaluation to assess performance and developmental needs.

b. There should be a development program implemented in conjunction with post-tenure evaluation.

c. Post-tenure evaluation increases the likelihood of faculty growth and vitality.

d. Only tenured colleagues should evaluate tenured faculty.

e. The criteria used to evaluate tenured faculty should differ from criteria used to evaluate non-tenured faculty.

Non-tenured faculty, on the other hand, more strongly agreed that:

f. Post-tenure evaluation leads to the weeding out of the incompetent.

Limitations of Study

This research study may be affected by the extent to which this sample is generalizable to the community college sector at large. Of concern also is the question of the representativeness of the 50.1 percent of the sample that responded to the survey. At this point, nothing is known about the individuals who chose not to respond.

Implications/Importance of Study

Despite these limitations, this study yielded some important implications for the field of higher education. These include:

1. Post-tenure evaluation has conceptual advocacy in the literature. A majority of faculty and administrators in the surveyed community colleges supported the process in concept as well as in practice.

2. In so far as one can generalize that the nine institutions surveyed are representative of the eighteen institutions belonging to the League for Innovation in the Community College and likewise that League institutions are representative of the community college sector at large, these findings suggest that community colleges are in the process of implementing formal post-tenure evaluation.

3. Community colleges in the process of formulating a post-tenure evaluation plan and those with a

plan already in place should examine their plans in light of this study's recommendations which include the following:

a. Post-tenure evaluation needs to have a direct linkage to a formalized faculty development program. Institutional resources must be available to provide growth and remediation opportunities. Likewise, rewards as well as consequences need to be clearly established. If such development opportunities and rewards are not available, institutions should critically and seriously question the value of engaging at all in the process of post-tenure evaluation.

b. Post-tenure evaluation plans should be examined to ensure that faculty and students are involved in their design and that multiple sources of input are required; criteria are specific and objective yet allow flexibility to accommodate individual faculty interests and/or department/division priorities.

c. The growth contract concept should be re-evaluated and re-examined as a means to allow a tenured faculty member, working in conjunction with his/her supervisor, the oppportunity to develop an individualized plan of work and/or to mutually agree upon the criteria to be used in the evaluation.

d. Since pre-tenure performance is an integral factor affecting post-tenure performance, serious consideration should be given to an extension of the probationary period to allow time for a more thorough assessment of a faculty member prior to the award of tenure.

4. While four-year institutions are admittedly different from community colleges in many respects, they might also examine their position relative to post-tenure evaluation in light of the present findings.

5. This study uncovered a need for further research on this topic at both the junior and senior institutional level. In particular:

   a. This study should be replicated with community college institutions outside the League for Innovation in order to validate results.

   b. A like study should be conducted with senior institutions in order to assess the status of post-tenure evaluation at that level.

   c. The present study seemed to indicate that present effectiveness and benefit of post-tenure evaluation are questionable. An in-depth examination of this question needs to occur.

Conclusion

Designing and operationalizing a post-tenure evaluation process that nourishes faculty growth, recognizes faculty accomplishment and fosters faculty improvement is no easy task. Sufficient financial and manpower resources are requisite. In the final analysis, an individual institution must decide if such a process is feasible given the varying constraints incumbent upon it. However, if we continue to support the notion--which so many have for so long--that the faculty is the "university," then institutions facing ever-aging and immobile faculty must out of necessity address the issue of faculty vitality and the quality of faculty worklife.

Based on the present study, post-tenure evaluation--when driven by faculty input, accompanied by adequate institutional resources, and designed specifically for the purpose of faculty development--finds support among community college faculty/administrators and is seen as a viable strategy for institutional renewal.

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